

## An Electrifying Month

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**O**n March 1, 2007, a devastating tornado swept through the city of Enterprise, Ala., killing eight high school students and an elderly city resident. In the days that followed, downed electrical lines posed a deadly hazard in the debris-strewn areas of the city. Rescue workers, power crews and local volunteers, many from the Army's nearby Fort Rucker, responded by going into the area to help the storm's victims. Fortunately, no one was injured or killed by coming into contact with a live downed power line. But not everyone in America is so fortunate.

Each year, approximately 400 people are killed and thousands more injured in electrical accidents. Beyond the human cost, the nearly 140,000 electrical fires that happen annually result in billions of dollars in property damage. Helping prevent those fatalities, injuries and property losses is the reason May has been designated National Electrical Safety Month. The goal, according to Electrical Safety Foundation International, is to promote electrical safety in the home, school and workplace.

Power lines are the single greatest on-the-job electrical hazard, killing an average of 133 workers per year. Contacts by ladders, construction equipment and gardening tools is the leading cause of electrocutions of this type.

In addition to power line hazards, there are a number of other electrical dangers lying in wait for unsuspecting victims. Observing the following safety checks from the Wiregrass Electrical Cooperative of Dothan, Ala., can reduce your potential of becoming an electrical accident victim:

**Receptacles.** Inspect receptacles for overloads and cracked or missing faceplates. Also, ensure child-proof protective plugs have been inserted into receptacles to prevent injuries to small children.

**Service cords.** Ensure the service (power) cords for your electrical appliances aren't cracked, frayed or spliced or wrapped with electrical tape. Also be sure they haven't been nailed or stapled to walls or placed under rugs.

**Service plugs.** Ensure plugs are inserted properly into receptacles and that ground pins (third prong) haven't been removed to make a grounded plug fit a two-pronged receptacle.

**Ground fault circuit interrupters.** These receptacles protect individuals from shock by breaking the electrical circuit when electrical current attempts to run through the human body to the ground. GFCIs should be installed anywhere damp conditions could exist such as kitchens, bathrooms, garages, crawl spaces, basements and outdoor receptacles. Because they can fail after several years, GFCIs should be replaced with new harmonized GFCIs, which incorporate improved safety features to better protect and alert users when the device malfunctions.

**Appliances.** If an appliance consistently trips a circuit breaker or blows a fuse when you plug it in or shocks you when you touch it, unplug the appliance and either have it repaired or replaced.

**Outdoor equipment.** Ensure electric mowers, hedge trimmers, leaf blowers and power tools are never used while it's raining or in wet conditions. Also check any heavy duty power cords you use for outdoor equipment for wear or cracks in the insulation.

**Electrical wiring.** Don't risk serious injury or death by attempting do-it-yourself home electrical repairs. Always leave electrical wiring jobs to certified electricians.

For more information, visit the EFSI Web site at <http://www.esfi.org/home-safety.html> or the Wiregrass Electric Cooperative Web site at <http://www.wiregrass.coop/mayenergy.html>.

## Occupational Hazards?

More than 5,000 people die each year from injuries suffered on the job. To emphasize the importance of reducing these illnesses and injuries, the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week will be observed May 6 through 12, 2007.



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According to the American Society of Safety Engineers, the week has three primary goals to:

- Increase understanding of the benefits gained by investing in occupational health and safety
- Highlight the contributions of safety, health and occupational professionals
- Help reduce workplace injuries and illnesses through encouraging new health, safety and environmental activities

This year's primary focus is on transportation safety, the No. 1 cause of work-related deaths. According to the most recent data provided by the ASSE, 43,433 people died in transportation-related accidents during 2005 and another 2.7 million were injured. The cost of these fatalities and injuries was more than \$230 billion. In addition, the 2005 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, published by the U.S. Department of Labor, profiled other fatal work-related injuries by type:

**Aircraft**—147 fatal injuries, a decline of 36 percent from the previous two years

**Railroad**—84 fatal injuries, an increase from 50 fatalities during 2004

**Falls**—767 fatal injuries, a 7-percent decline from the series high in 2004. While fatal falls from roofs, ladders, stairs and non-moving vehicles declined, falls on the same level (falling to the floor or against an object) increased.

**Struck by objects**—604 fatal injuries compared to the previous year's 602

**Homicides**—564 workplace homicides, a slight increase from the previous year's 559

**Suicides**—177 workplace suicides, a 14-percent decline from 2005 and a series low

**Exposure**—Fatal work injuries resulting from exposure to harmful substances or environments rose 7 percent in 2005.

The most notable increase was the 47 workers who died after exposure to environmental heat compared to 18 fatalities in 2004. Fatalities also rose as more workers lost their lives from inhaling caustic, noxious or allergenic substances.

For additional information on North American Occupational and Safety Health Week or workplace safety, visit the ASSE Web site at <http://www.asse.org/newsroom/naosh07/>.

**For more information on sports eyewear, check out the following Web site:**

**<http://www.allaboutvision.com/sports/protection/htm>.**

